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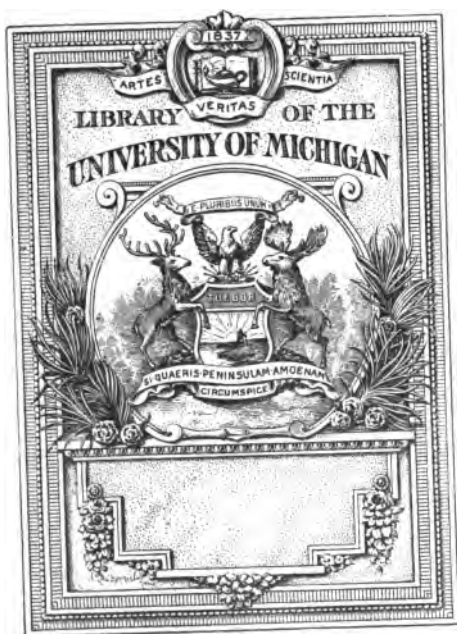
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# A MYSTERY PLAY

In honour of the Nativity of Our Lord



By Robert Hugh Benson



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# A MYSTERY PLAY



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Lo! Gentiles in Thy Light shall walk;  
 and Kings, all in the splendour bright  
 Of this Thy rising. Lift Thine eyes and see



# A MYSTERY PLAY

IN HONOUR OF THE  
NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

BY  
ROBERT HUGH BENSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1908

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21 October 1921  
Received 1-21-20 ELN

FILIABVS · AMICIS

CONVENTVS · S · MARIAE · CANTABRIGIENSIS · ALVMNIS

QVARVM

ARDOR · PIETAS · REVERENTIA

INGENERAVIT · FOVIT · ILLVMINAVIT

LIBELLVM

VOTA · IMPLORANS

D · D

SCRIPTOR · INDIGNVS



## PREFACE



THE following play was produced at Cambridge in December 1907 and January 1908. It was acted six times altogether, to full houses, upon a temporary stage in the school-room of St. Mary's Convent, by the girls of the school, whose ages ran from six to eighteen. The scenery, the properties, and the costumes were constructed—with the exception of two simple Eastern dresses and a few weapons—out of materials lent to the convent or possessed by it. The cost, therefore, was extremely small; the trouble only was great, and this lay almost entirely in the learning of the parts and the rehearsals.

It is alleged sometimes, as one reason for fearing such performances, that the spirit of the age is very different from that in which this method of bringing the Christian mysteries before the eye was almost universally practised. This fear, of course, was not absent from the minds of those responsible for this production, but it proved wholly illusory. The audience, consisting



of Catholics and non-Catholics drawn from all classes, was begged, by a sentence on the printed programme, to refrain from all applause and conversation, and loyally responded to the request. There was practically a dead silence from the first notes of the first carol to the departure of the audience at the end.

It has been thought worth while, therefore, in this age of Pageants, to print and publish the text of a play which has for its object the furthering of devotion to the Nativity of our Blessed Lord, and which has been put to the test of actual performance before a mixed assembly, in the hope that others perhaps may venture upon a task which to its original promoters has appeared at least to justify its inception. Full directions are given in appendices as to the methods by which the staging was accomplished and the properties constructed, as well as, in the text itself, minute stage directions as to the movements of the actors. Realism and passion have been studiously avoided in the training of these ; and in their place a kind of slow and deliberate simplicity has been arrived at throughout. There was practically no attempt made to disguise the faces of the actors, except in the matter of a brown stain applied to the faces and hands of a few, and of two or three beards in the cases of old men.

In case, however, that the recommendations given in

the book do not seem sufficient to others, the author will be happy to answer any questions that he can.

The present edition contains illustrations, appendices, and stage directions ; a cheaper acting edition shortly to be issued will contain only the words with a few necessary remarks.

The collection from which the carols are taken is one compiled by Dr. Stainer and the Rev. H. R. Bramley, under the title "Christmas Carols, New and Old." It is published with music by Novello. Acknowledgments are made in the proper places.

An admirable orchestral effect may be produced by the use of a piano and an American organ played together.

The play as a whole does not aspire to be considered a literary production ; it is only published as a practicable drama.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY.

JOSEPH.

TOBIAS (*Landlord of Inn at Bethlehem*).

DAVID (*his servant*).

ZACHARY

EZRA

BEN-EZRA

} *Three Shepherds.*

ELIPHAZ

NADAB

UZZIEL

} *Three Merchants.*

MARTHA (*A Child*).

ABEL (*her brother*).

ANGELS (*four*).

HERALD (*An Angel*).

## SCENES

I. *Road outside Bethlehem.*

II. *The Kitchen of the Inn.*

III. *Hills outside Bethlehem.*

IV. *Interior of the Stable.*

V. *The same.*

NOTE.—In the stage directions throughout, “R.”=right of actor who faces the audience, and “L.”=his left.





## PROLOGUE

*Before curtain rises there is sung—*



OD rest you merry, gentlemen,\*  
Let nothing you dismay ;  
Remember Christ our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas Day,  
To save us all from Satan's power  
When we were gone astray.

*Chorus.* O ! tidings of comfort and joy.

\* Bramley and Stainer's "Christmas Carols, New and Old," 1st Series, No. 1.

A

## A MYSTERY PLAY

2. In Bethlehem, in Jewry,  
This blessed Babe was born,  
And laid within a manger,  
Upon this blessed morn.  
The which His mother Mary  
Did nothing take in scorn.

*Chorus.* O ! tidings . . .

3. From God our Heavenly Father  
A blessed Angel came,  
And unto certain Shepherds  
Brought tidings of the same :  
How that in Bethlehem was born .  
The Son of God by name.

*Chorus.* O ! tidings . . .

4. Now to the Lord sing praises  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood  
Each other now embrace ;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All other doth deface.

*Chorus.* O ! tidings . . .

*Curtains part—Enter HERALD, closing curtains behind him. He bows low, slowly, with arms across his breast ; he recovers himself perfectly upright, and begins in a clear, declaiming voice—*

Good Christians, now the time is near [here]

When long ago our Saviour dear

Came hither from His heavenly hall

To teach and help and save us all.

For born He was, a little Child,

And Mary was His mother mild,

And Joseph guarded both of them

Within the cave of Bethlehem.

Here simple shepherds ran to view

*[He makes a gesture with his right hand.*

The Lord alike of them and you :

Here, on their camels, came to see

*[He repeats gesture with his left hand.*

Their Lord, wise kings of Araby.

Here Angels sang their praises meet,

And bowed before His little feet,

Whose hands the heavens and earth have wrought

*[He extends his hands slowly, palms uppermost.*

And, pierced by nails, our ransom bought.

To this same God the whole world wide

Bows and adores at Christmastide.

*[He bows very slowly as he speaks the line.*



## A MYSTERY PLAY

We therefore, too, with good intent,  
The simple story here present.  
Here sheep and shepherds shall you see,  
The Holy Child and sweet Mary,  
Great angels and good Joseph too,  
Merchants, and simple folks like you,  
The sturdy landlord of the inn,  
Cold snow without and fire within—  
All shall be shown as best we can,  
In praise of Jesus, God and man.

[*He bows.*]

We therefore pray you of your grace  
To hear in silence and good face.  
Mock not, if here or there we fail  
To set out well this holy tale.  
Keep silence, too, except ye sing,  
As we shall do, before our King.  
And if we please you, well, why then,  
We pray you, hold your peace again.  
And so God ✠ bless us all. Amen.

[*He signs himself; bows; and exit backwards  
through curtains.*]



*Exeunt the three Merchants.*

## SCENE I

*Road outside Bethlehem. Sky, stars, snow. Up, centre, a little to left, a stump of a tree. As curtain begins to rise, there is sung by invisible Choir. . . .\**



WHEN Christ was born of Mary free  
In Bethlehem, that faire citie,  
Angels sang there, with mirth and  
glee,  
In excelsis gloria !

*Chorus (repeat). In excelsis . . .*

\* B. & S., 1st Series, No. 19.

2. Herdsmen beheld those angels bright,  
To them appearing with great light,  
Who said, " God's Son is born to-night,"  
In excelsis gloria. [*Chorus.*]

3. The King is come to save mankind,  
As in Scripture truths we find,  
Therefore this song we have in mind,  
In excelsis gloria. [*Chorus.*]

4. Then, dear Lord, for Thy great grace,  
Grant us in bliss to see Thy face,  
That we may sing to Thy solace  
In excelsis gloria. [*Chorus.*]

*Then, enter ZACHARY (L.) ; walking with a  
stick, carrying a bundle and a lantern.  
His shoulders are covered with snow.  
He walks very slowly. In centre of stage  
he halts, looks about him slowly.*

ZACH.

Now, God have mercy ! I must rest awhile,  
For mile on weary mile, and mile on mile,  
I've trudged on foot since break of day began,  
And, sure, I'm but an old and ancient man.

*[He goes across to stump, and sits on it slowly, disposing his stick and bundle and lantern. He settles himself deliberately, folding his arms.]*

Time was, once, long ago, when I would run  
And leap and swim as good as any one.  
Aye, aye,—to run a race or climb a wall—  
Aye, aye,—I'd beat 'em all, I'd beat 'em all.

*[Shakes his head reminiscently. Then passes his hands slowly down his knees.]*

But, sure, I'm stiff, and my poor bones are old,  
And night is bitter cold—'tis bitter cold . . .  
Yes, yes *[begins to look about him]*. I've come a mighty  
step to-day.

Why, but—

*[Stands up suddenly, stares out (R.), under hand.]*

Is that the town so far away ?

I thought 'twas nearer. But this pesky snow—— !

At Rachel's tomb the neighbours bade me go

A mile or two. . . . Yes, yes, they told me so . . .

*[Sits again heavily.]*

And now I'm wearied out . . . and not so near

As I had thought . . . *(turns to L., stares out.)*

God bless me ! who comes here ?

[Enter (L.) ELIPHAZ, NADAB, and UZZIEL, together, arm-in-arm ; richly dressed ; muffled up ; carrying bundles, walking with sticks. NAD. carries a lantern. They come across briskly as they reach stump. ZACH. suddenly stands up, pulling his forelock. They start violently apart.

ZACH.

Good gentlemen——

ELIPH.

Why, murrain take the man  
For frightening of us so ! I never can  
Abide these rustics.

[He crosses over (R.). Others remain (L.).

NAD.

They've no sense, I say,  
To fright three gentlemen upon their way.  
See here, old man ! (*Lifts stick threateningly.*)

UZZ.

No, no. Let be ! let be !

[He interposes his arm.

See here, old man ! I'd have a word with thee.  
Are you a native here ? (ZACH. nods.) Why, then, I'll  
lay

You'll guide us, for, I think, we've lost our way.  
A piece of gold or so 'll help you tell——

ZACH.

Why, no, good sir ; I need no gold——

ELIPH. (*interrupting*).

Well, well——

We're three good merchants, come, as you can see,  
For this enrolling, down from Galilee,  
And now we've missed our way.

ZACH.

Yes, yes, good friend,  
I'll set you on your way, if you'll but lend  
An arm to my old arm to bear me up ;  
For sure I've never had a bite or sup  
Since break of day.

UZZ.

Yes, yes, old man ; but tell  
Us first our way ; and all will then be well.

ZACH. (*pointing* (R.) *very deliberately*).

Why, down the hill straight on, another mile,  
Then to your right, and so beyond the stile

[*He makes gestures of pointing.*]

To where the vineyards stand—(remember them),  
And that'll bring you straight to Bethlehem.

*[He turns, and gathers stick and bundle.]*

And now, sir—*[comes forward]*—your good arm.

UZZ. *(avoiding).*

Why, no, no, no,  
You've given us all we asked. We could not go  
With such a bag of bones! That's not the way  
To make a contract. Come, be off, I say!

*[Threatens him as ZACH. approaches again.]*

ZACH.

Sir, sir; I'm wearied out! I'm done to death!  
I'm old and weak of limb, and short of breath.  
I pray you— *[Seizes ELIPHAZ's arm, who shakes it off.]*

ELIPH.

Why, here's impudence as well!  
Is't so you speak to men of Israel? *[Threatens.]*

ZACH.

Sir . . . for the love of God . . .

Uzz.

Why, that's too good !

“The love of God !”—I've always understood  
That God was Justice ! Eh ! good Nadab, eh ?

[*He turns to NAD.*

What do you think ? That never was the way  
We learned at school ! [*Threatens ZACHARY.*

Hands off ! old man ! I say !

[*ELIPH. crosses (L.).*

ZACH.

Sir, for Messias' sake ! . . .

Uzz.

Why, who is He ?

ZACH. (*solemnly*).

Sir, it is He told of in prophecy,  
Who surely comes one day to set all right,  
And judge in love and justice. Why, this night  
Maybe, He'll come.

Uzz.

Nay, nay ! That's past a joke !  
Come, gentlemen ; enough of crazy folk !



We must be going on a mile or two  
To shelter ; and, my friend, good-night to you !

*[Exeunt (R.) three Merchants, saluting ZACHARY ironically. ZACHARY stands looking after them, hands raised. He totters a step or two, then he lets hands sink slowly.]*

ZACH.

Now, God have mercy ! But I'm wearied sore.

*[Begins to limp back to stump.]*

So wearied I have never been before.

*[He sits heavily on ground, leaning against stump. Then, after a pause.]*

My limbs that heavy ! *[Lifts hands, and lets them drop.]*

My old eyes, that dim !

*[Stares about, bewildered.]*

Why—if He came—I could not look at Him. . . .

*[His voice grows weaker.]*

Dreams, did they say ? . . . And old Isaias too ? . . .

*[He rolls his eyes.]*

David . . . And Balaam . . . and the Fleece of  
Dew

That Gideon saw. . . . Why, now, how soft the  
snow . . . *[Sleepy voice ; closing eyes.]*

I'll sleep . . . a bit . . . a bit . . . before . . . I . . . go.

*[Sinks down. Music begins very softly, and verse of carol is played through as he falls asleep. Then MARTHA and ABEL begin to sing, off.]*

And . . . God . . . have . . . pity on . . . all . . .  
poor folks . . . here below.

MAR. AND ABEL.\*

The Lord at first had Adam made  
Out of the dust and clay,  
And in his nostrils breathed life. . . .

*[Enter (L.) MARTHA and ABEL, carrying bundles, with sticks, over shoulders, hand in hand. MARTHA carries a lantern.]*

E'en as the Scriptures say.  
And then in Eden's Paradise  
He placed him to dwell  
That he within— *[Stop abruptly.]*

MAR.

Why, Abel, what's that lying by the tree ?

*[ABEL clings to her, lets go, tries to run.]*

Nay, nay, be quiet ! Here, take hold of me.

*[She is staring at ZACHARY.]*

\* B. & S., 2nd Series, No. 21.

ABEL.

Oh ! Martha, Martha, I'm afraid—

*[Tries to pull her away.]*

MAR.

No, no.

*[She goes closer with him ; looks.]*

'Tis but an old man, sleeping in the snow.

Why—look how white he is ! How white and old !

He'll take his death ! The night is bitter cold.

*[Advances close to him with lantern.]*

Sir, sir ! Wake up. . . . Here, Abel, take the light !

*[Hands him lantern. He shrinks away.]*

You silly boy ! With God nor day nor night

Can harm His children. . . . Here, sir, wake, awake !

*[Shakes him by arm.]*

The night is cold. Sir !

*[She kneels by him.]*

For Messias' sake !

*[ZACHARY moans gently, lifts his head, looks round, sinks back.]*ZACH. *(sleepily).*

Messias ! eh ? Messias ? Why . . . they . . . said . . .

'Twas dreams . . . all dreams.

*[She shakes him.]*

Why . . . what is this ? . . . my head . . .

Is heavy . . . let me sleep . . .

*[Rolls over a little.]*

Ah ! let me sleep . . .  
And dream Messias' coming . . . lest . . . He . . . weep . . .  
To find no welcome.

MAR. (*rapidly*).

Abel, here— [*He is sobbing.*

Don't cry. . . .

Quick, boy, I tell you . . . lest the old man die.

[*Together they lift him slowly, first up to tree,  
then on his feet. He clings to them.  
They move about ; finally he sits down on  
stump, and begins to recover himself.*

ZACH. (*rubbing eyes*).

Why, 'tis but children ! And I thought that He  
Had sent His angels down to succour me,  
And bring me tidings that His Christ was here.

[*Looks round, then drops his head.*

No, dreams ! All dreams it is.

[*MARTHA takes him by arm.*

MAR.

Sir ! can you hear

Me speak, good father ? Can you see me plain ?

[*He looks at her ; recovers further.*

ZACH.

Why, yes. . . . I heard you singing. Sing again  
That which you sang. [*Releases his arm.*]

Nay, nay, child, let me go !  
I'm well awake enough. 'Twas but the snow  
Bewildered me. What was that song so sweet  
I heard so plain ?

[*MARTHA comes a little forward, smiling shyly*]

MAR.

Sir, to beguile our feet  
We sang a carol, made—Oh ! long ago,  
Of times when God walked once with men below  
In Eden's garden ; whence all woe began  
From Satan's tempting and the sin of man.  
That was the little song you heard so plain  
As we were coming.

ZACH.

Sing the song again.

[*MARTHA and ABEL stand side by side (R.).*]

MAR. AND ABEL.

The Lord at first had Adam made  
Out of the dust and clay,  
And in his nostrils breathed life,  
E'en as the Scriptures say.

And then in Eden's Paradise  
He placed him to dwell,  
That he within it should remain  
To dress and keep it well.

[*They turn to ZACH.*

ZACH.

Why—

[*Chorus suddenly begins from behind scene.  
Children are terrified. ZACH. stands up,  
frightened. They cling to him. During  
the singing they recover themselves a little.  
They look about, standing all together (R.)  
facing (L.). ABEL leaves the others and  
begins to move across stage, looking in all  
directions.*

INVISIBLE CHORUS.

Now let good Christians all begin  
A holier life to live ;  
And to rejoice and merry be  
For this is Christmas Eve.

4. Now mark the goodness of the Lord  
Which He to mankind bore,  
His mercy soon He did extend  
Lost man for to restore ;

B

## A MYSTERY PLAY

And, therefore, to redeem our souls  
 From death and hell and thrall,  
 He said His own dear Son should be  
 The Saviour of us all.

*Chorus.* Now let . . .

ABEL (*letting go*).

Why! What was that? Who's singing there below? . . .

[*Runs to MARTHA, who is looking (L.)*].

I'm frightened, Martha. . . . Martha! let us go.

[*ZACH. also staring (L.)*].

ZACH.

Why! Who comes here? [*He goes a step.*

An old man and a maid!

Is that their singing? . . . No . . . she seems afraid

And weary. Children! See how slow they wind!

[*Looks intently, under hand.*

Children! look closer. . . . Who comes on behind? . . .

No . . . he is gone again. . . . I thought I saw

Figures who came and went, behind, before,

As if to keep them. . . . Children, do you see?

[*A silence.*



Why! Who comes here? An old man and a maid---- See  
how slow they wind!





MAR. (*looking*).

I see a maiden, and a man like thee.

Old, old and heavy. . . . Why, sir, look again !

Why . . . who is that ? Nay . . . nay, I saw him plain—

All, all in light— Nay, but he's gone again.

*[The three shrink together backwards across the stage to (R.) as (L.) enter JOSEPH and MARY, very slowly. She leans on him. They come up to tree. She sinks on to it, in his arms, and drops her head. He stands behind, holding her. So the tableau remains. Behind the scenes the Chorus sings, as below. During the singing, ABEL advances step by step, almost imperceptibly, with MARTHA behind and ZACHARY last.]*

CHORUS.

A Virgin unspotted, the Prophet foretold,\*  
Should bring forth a Saviour, which now we behold,  
To be our Redeemer from death, hell, and sin,  
Which Adam's transgression had wrapp'd us in.

*Chorus.* Aye and therefore be merry ; set sorrow aside,  
Christ Jesus our Saviour was born on this tide.

\* B. & S., 1st Series, No. 3.

2. At Bethlehem city in Jewry it was  
That Joseph and Mary together did pass,  
All for to be taxed with many one moe ;  
Great Cæsar commanded the same should be so.

*Chorus.* Aye and therefore. . . .

3. There were they constrained in a stable to lie,  
Where horses and asses they used for to tie,  
Their lodging so simple they took it no scorn,  
But against the next morning our Saviour was born.

*Chorus.* Aye and therefore. . . .

*[At this point ABEL reaches MARY, and kneels down before her on his knees, looking, on her right, and MARTHA on her left, ZACHARY in centre. During the next verses, MARY opens her eyes, sees them, then slowly stretches out her hands on to their heads ; each kisses her hand. Then both MARY's hands on ZACHARY's head. He takes them both and kisses them. All this very slowly during following verse.]*

#### INVISIBLE CHORUS.

Then God sent an angel from heaven so high,  
To certain poor shepherds in fields where they lie,

And bade them no longer in sorrow to stay,  
Because that our Saviour was born on this day.

*Chorus.* Aye and therefore. . . .

*[Then MARY is slowly supported by JOSEPH on her right, with her arm round his shoulders, and, on the left, in the same way, by MARTHA and ABEL. ZACHARY slowly gathers up bundles and sticks and lantern.*

Then presently after the shepherds did spy,  
Vast numbers of angels to stand in the sky ;  
They joyfully talked, and sweetly did sing,  
To God be all glory, our heavenly King.

*Chorus.* Aye and therefore. . . .

*[They begin to go out (R.) in the above order. As they disappear (R.), enter (L.) two tall angels bearing swords in right hand and burning tapers in left, and two small angels bearing tapers only. These pairs slowly cross stage, and as curtain comes down they are still passing, and simultaneously the last chorus ends.*

To teach us humility all this was done,  
And learn we from thence haughty pride for to  
shun,

## A MYSTERY PLAY

A manger His cradle, who came from above,  
The great God of mercy, of peace, and of love.

*Chorus.* Aye and therefore. . . .

CURTAIN.

*[A quiet piece of music begins and continues until  
Carol.]*





The three Merchants rise in alarm -

## SCENE II

*Before curtain rises, invisible Choir sings—*



SOME let us all sweet carols sing,\*

Omni relicto tædio

Of Mary, Mother of our King,

Christoque Jesu Filio.

When she had borne that Holy Thing.

Reponit in præsepio (*bis*).

\* This carol is printed here by the kind permission of Messrs. Novello and Co. (B. & S., 3rd Series, No. 49).

2. Now Gabriel sweeping from the sky,  
 Missus a Deo nuntius,  
 These tidings beareth from on high,  
 Lætissimis pastoribus,  
 Behold your God on earth doth lie,  
 Invenietis protinus.
4. Quickly away the shepherds flew,  
 Clara Gabrielis voce,  
 Rejoicing as if filled anew,  
 Bono Bacchico liquore,  
 Leaping and dancing nigh they drew,  
 Simul in Bethlehem Judæ.
6. They entered then the hallowed cave,  
 Jesum hic adoraverunt,  
 The best of all they had they gave,  
 Puerumque oraverunt,  
 Pardon for that was lacking crave,  
 Subitoque abierunt.

## CURTAIN RISES

SCENE—*Kitchen of inn. In centre a fire: pot over it. White walls. Two doors R. and L., R. into street, L. into inn. A table R. with three stools. Discovered TOBIAS, stirring pot, and DAVID busying himself with*

*piates at the table. After curtain is up, TOBIAS leaves spoon in pot, and comes forward. During all this scene he is plainly uneasy and indecisive. He relapses into silence, then rouses himself to speak.*

TOB.

And you have heard it, David? *[They speak softly.]*

DAV.

Yes, all day,  
Good master, have I heard them.

TOB.

“Them,” you say?  
Why, who are they?  
*[He looks steadily at DAV., with folded arms.]*

DAV.

I know not, but the sound  
Was that of singing in the air, and round  
*[He makes gesture.]*  
About ; and steps, and wings ; and everywhere  
I heard them plainly.

TOB.

Was it from the air  
You heard it?



DAV.

Aye, sir.

TOB.

Nothing have you seen?

DAV.

No, sir.

[*A silence.*

TOB.

Now, David, what doth all this mean? . . .

I, too, have heard. . . . Say not a word of this

To any man. . . . For these are mysteries.

[*Clamour of voices and stamping.*

[TOB. *leaps back to pot and begins stirring*  
*again.* DAV. *turns to plates, &c.*

TOB.

Now, boy, make haste. . . . Hark to the guests below.

[*Shouts.*

Coming, sirs, coming. . . . Yes, boy, take and go.

[*Exit DAV. (L.) with plates and bread.*

I'll bring this presently. God bless us! Why

[*Murmur without.*

I never heard such tumult. No, not I

In all my days. [*Knocking heard on door (R.).*]

Yes, yes, come in, come in.

[*Enter (R.) THREE MERCHANTS.*]

ELIPH.

Well, my good host, and have you room within?

TOB.

What? More of them? Who are you, gentlemen?

ELIPH.

Why, we are merchants three, come back again

To Bethlehem, as all the world doth know,

For our enrolment. Through the frost and snow

We've trudged full many a mile. And have you space

For three good gentlemen? [*He sits down heavily.*]

TOB.

Why, all the place

Is full from roof to garret. [*Tumult breaks out again.*]

Hark to them!

Why, all mankind seems come to Bethlehem!

NAD.

Well, well! Have you no beds?

TOB.

Not one to spare,  
Nor bite nor sup, I think. [*He makes despairing gesture.*]

UZZ. (*pointing to pot*).

What have you there ?

[*Enter DAV. (L.)*].

TOB.

No, no, good sir ! First come first served, I say.

To DAV.

Here, lad, make haste. Come ! bear the pot away.

[*DAV. takes it and exit (L.)*].

ELIPH.

Why, but you cannot turn us out ! 'Tis night  
And freezing cold. We must have food and light  
And roof above us.

NAD.

Let us have the floor  
Here in this kitchen, if you have no more.

TOB.

Well, gentlemen, I tell you, as I live,  
I have no better and no more to give.

ELIPH.

Well, we must make a shift to rest and dine.  
A loaf of bread you have, at least, and wine,  
And skins, I'll warrant you, to keep the cold  
From killing us. The sheep within the fold  
Secmed well-nigh frozen as we passed them by.

ТОВ.

Well, gentlemen, if you can shift, then I  
Will do my best to please you. Sit you down.

[NAD. and Uzz. sit; unloose wrappings.

*Enter* DAV. (L.).

**Well, are they served there ?**

DAY.

Yes, sir. [*He stands waiting.*]

ТОВ.

Is full. I never saw the like before !

*To Day.*

Here, lad ! make haste ! Go, fetch a bottle more,  
And bread and meat. These gentlemen must dine.

[*Exit* DAV. (L.).

(To THREE.) I promise you, a cup of our good wine  
Will set you up, sirs. *[He sets out plates and cups.]*

ELIPH.

Ah! I warrant you

We'll do good justice to a cup or two.

*[They range themselves. Enter DAV. with bottle, mugs, bread, and meat, and exit again (L.). They begin to eat and drink. Landlord stands with arms akimbo by fire, watching. Now and again he comes to table, helps them to wine, &c., and goes back, as conversation continues.]*

TOB.

And was all quiet as you came?

*[He looks at them curiously.]*

NAD.

Why, yes.

All was as still as death—a wilderness  
Of snow and frost.

TOB.

And did you see no man?

*[Very earnestly, leaning on table.]*

NAD.

Why, yes, a few. Just as the road began  
To come to Rachel's tomb we passed a maid  
And old man, and her arm in his was laid ;

*[He pauses to eat during this speech. He is  
very cool and self-contained.]*

And they were walking—walking wondrous slow :

*[He makes a little gesture.]*

The maid seemed wearied. . . . And an hour ago  
Two children ; and then afterwards again  
Some old fool of a shepherd-man ; and then  
None further, till we reached the market-square.

TOB.

Ah ! yes. A mighty company was there  
Of neighbours, come to sec the folk arrive  
From all the country.

*[He begins to walk about uneasily, pensively.  
There is a long silence. The three eat.  
Then he suddenly comes back.]*

As I am alive,  
I could have sworn that more were there than men.

ELIPH.

What, women ?

c

TOB.

Aye, and more. (*He looks darkly.*)

ELIPH.

Well, children, then ?

TOB.

Aye, more than human-kind.

[*They stare at him, dropping food.*

Once and again,

[*He looks at them earnestly, making gestures.*

*Speaking softly—*

As I looked out upon the folks, it seemed  
Something was forward—somewhat—or I dreamed !—  
Of more than earthly business. For the air  
Seemed full of singing, runnings to and fro,  
Then silences again—rushes of sound—  
Footsteps, it seemed, moved on the frozen ground,  
As if some company, to come and go  
Was set, all busy, in the market-square.

ELIPH. (*after pause*).

Bah ! You were dreaming, man ! The air was keen,  
And you were weary. . . . There was nothing seen ?

[*He seems a little disturbed.*

TOB.

No ; for I asked my lad if aught were there  
That he could see——

NAD.

Bah ! You and your market-square !  
A dreamer ! Like the old man on the hill  
Who babbled of God's Love and Justice till  
I was all wearied—and Messias' name,  
Who comes one day, he said. Why, but the same  
Old tale is past and gone for you and me  
Since old Isaias babbled prophecy.  
(*Scornfully.*) "A Virgin shall conceive," he said ! . . .

CHOIR *softly sings a line or two—*

*"A Virgin unspotted, the Prophet foretold,  
Should bring forth a Saviour whom now we. . . ."*

TOB. (*starting*).

What is that sound ?

Do you hear nothing ?

[*They stare. Glamour breaks out in room (L.),  
and music stops.*

Gone again, and drowned !

But you heard nothing ?

[*Enter David (L.) running, excited. He stops  
dead.*



ELIPH. (*after pause*).

Why, the man is mad !  
Singing and footsteps ! What next ? Here, you lad,  
Did you hear aught now ?

DAV. (*frightened*).

Sir, what did you say ?

ELIPH. (*banging table impatiently*).

Did you hear aught just now ? From far away  
A sound of singing ?

DAV.

Why, sir, yes—all day—

And now again !

[*Silence. They eye one another uneasily.*]

NAD. (*to TOB*).

Bah ! Here, a cup of wine  
Will clear your hearing. I dare wager mine  
'S as good as yours. Some drunken fellow there  
Is noisy in his cups.

[*Holds out cup of wine to TOB., who takes it hesitatingly.*]

TOB. (*after pause*).

Well, sir, I swear

I never heard nor drunk nor sober sing

As fair as this I heard. (*Drinks.*)

ELIPH. (*easily*).

Why, anything

May maze a man on such a night, when snow

And cold conspire to starve the senses. Go

And see your other guests. Perhaps . . . Maybe

You'll find them singing.

[TOB. *begins to go out (L.) slowly.*

Aye, come back to me,

[*Exit TOB. (L.) with DAV. whispering to him.*

And we three'll join them.

(*To other two.*) Did you ever hear

Such madness?

Uzz.

Bah! Why, all the world is mad

Save such as you and I. As for that lad,

I swear he spoke so just to please the man.

NAD.

But to come back to where we first began—

[*Air of "A Virgin" sung by CHOIR with closed lips ; it continues very faintly down to where ELIPH. opens the door.*

What think you of Messias and that tale  
The prophets tell ?

ELIPH.

Well, may not prophets fail  
As much as any man ? I hold such men  
No better than this dreamer back again.  
Once, as a child, I thought it otherwise,  
And deemed that all was holy, and the skies  
Crowded with angels, and the earth I trod  
All holy as the dwelling-place of God.  
And now ! Why, I know better. . . . (*Drinks.*)

NAD.

As for me,  
I'm with you. (*Drinks.*)

UZZ.

So am I. The Sadducee  
Seems wisest of the lot.

[*They pledge one another. Knocking heard (R.).*

Why, who comes here ?

[*He pauses. Then he goes to door (R.) impatiently,  
and opens it. A burst of music. Silence.  
He seems to listen.*

No, no ! No room ! Nor here, nor anywhere ! . . .

[*Listens.*

I tell you, No ! There's not a bed to spare. [*Listens.*

NAD.

Who's that ? (*Uzz. begins to stare towards door, listening.*)

ELIPH. (*after pause*).

The landlord's out. . . . What's that ? . . . Why, then  
You'd best find shelter as you may.

[*Closes door ; comes back. As he comes to seat,  
knocking.*

Again !

[*Rises angrily ; goes to door, flings open. After  
pause—*

That's no affair of mine ! I tell you, Go.

And find room where you may. Above, below,

The place is packed. Be off ! be off, I say !

[*Half-closes door, listening.*

No ; not for such as you. The host's away,

Up in Jerusalem. I'm master here ;

That's my last word.

[*Bangs door ; comes to seat. Knocking. He  
rises furiously.*

Here's impudence, I swear !

[*Opens door once more.*

I'll set the dogs upon you. . . . I don't care. . . .

[*Pause.*

Yes, to the stable then, with ox and ass.

[*Bangs door ; returns growling ; sits.*

NAD.

Who were the knaves ?

ELIPH.

That old man and the lass

We saw up yonder.

UZZ. (*who has been listening intently*).

Was there no one more ?

I could have sworn I heard them at the door—

A multitude of footsteps.

ELIPH. (*hands trembling, head jerking*).

Bah ! what stuff !

The two were there. No more ! And quite enough.

[*He drinks. The two stare.*]

NAD.

What ails you, friend ?

ELIPH. (*furiously*).

Ails me ! Why——

[*Enter TOB. and DAV. hurriedly (L.)*].

TOB.

Who came then ?

I swear I heard the music once again.

And knocking. Was there no one at the door ?

*[He hurries across to R., but stops irresolute.]*

ELIPH.

Music ? What foolery is this ?

NAD. *(coolly)*.

Before

You came just now, two folks were here, but now

Gone elsewhere to seek for shelter.

TOB.

How ?

*[He hastens to door (R.), followed by DAV.]*

Gone elsewhere ! Why, there's no room to find

In all the place.

*[Opens door ; looks out. Very faint music, "A Virgin unspotted . . . ;" it continues down to end of scene.]*

It surely were unkind

To turn a dog away on such a night. *(Turns from door.)*

Where are they gone ? Here, David, bring a light.

*[DAV. does so. He looks.]*

NAD.

Nay, they are gone. Here, drink a cup with me.

DAV. (*crying out, pointing*).

Oh ! master, look !

TOB. (*looking eagerly*).

Eh ? eh ? What is't you see ?

DAV.

There master, there !

[*The THREE MERCHANTS rise in alarm and stand L., staring R.*]

ELIPH.

What is it ? Speak, I say.

TOB. (*staring out*).

No. I see nothing !

DAV.

There, across the way !

All, all in light they move, a countless host.

[*He falls on knee.*]

ELIPH.

Bah ! bah ! What foolery ! He sees a ghost.

*[Shrinks in fear and anger.]*

TOB. *(quietly)*.

My lad, I can see nothing. . . . That's the byre  
Where lie the cattle.

DAV. *(suddenly crying out and pointing)*.

See ! all, all afire

With glory !

ELIPH. *(in terror, as are others)*.

Here, man ! Shut the door !

*[They continue there.]*

Well, if you will not, I will.

*[Sidles along wall ; shuts door angrily.]*

One fool more

Or less in such a household matters not.

NAD. *(recovering)*.

Why, landlord ! your old wits are clean forgot  
And wildered.



Uzz.

Drink a cup of wine with me !

There's no cure for such madness but good company.

*[Slowly TOB. comes across to table, still listening. DAV. slips out R. ELIPH. follows TOB. All fill cups, TOB. still listening. Music swells up ; dies again. TOB., after pause, touches his cup with the others. They all drink.]*

CURTAIN.

*Pastoral symphony begins at once, and continues until the Carol.*





Angel. *Gloria in Excelsis Deo.*

### SCENE III

*Before curtain rises, invisible choir sings.*



HE first Nowell the angel did say,\*  
 Was to certain poor shepherds in fields  
 as they lay ;  
 In fields where they lay keeping their  
 sheep,  
 On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

*Chorus.* Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
 Born is the King of Israel.

\* B. & S., 1st Series, No. 6.

2. They looked up and saw a Star  
Shining in the East, beyond them far ;  
And to the earth it gave great light,  
And so it continued both day and night.

*Chorus. Nowell . . .*

3. (4.) This Star drew nigh to the North-West,  
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest ;  
And there it did both stop and stay,  
Right over the place where Jesus lay.

*Chorus. Nowell . . .*

4. (6.) Then let us all with one accord  
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,  
That hath made Heaven and earth of nought,  
And with His Blood mankind hath bought.

*Chorus. Nowell . . .*

SCENE—*Hills outside Bethlehem. Lights very low. Starlit sky; rocks on either side; snow on ground, except round fire and shelter. R. A shelter of hurdles, open side facing audience, with a stool within it. A fire burning; heaps of skins round it. EZRA discovered L., looking out under his hand L.; so he continues a while. Enter R., from behind shelter, BEN-EZRA with lamb.*

BEN.

Well, father, do you see him ?

Ez. (*slowly, with pauses*).

No, not I ! (*Still looking.*)

Nought to be seen but snow and starry sky,

And that great star that hangs above the town.

[*He makes a gesture L.*

BEN.

Here is a lamb, new-born. (*He shows it.*)

Ez. (*without turning*).

Well, lay it down.

[BEN. *goes to shelter.*

An ill night to be born in ! Frost and snow,

Cold heaven above, and colder earth below.

I marvel any tender creature should be born

On such a night.

BEN.

I found it all forlorn,

Crying beside its mother.

Ez.

Lay it by

[BEN-EZRA *lays it by fire, wrapped up.*

And warm it.

[*He suddenly takes step or two to L., relieved.*

Here comes Uncle Zachary !

[*Enter ZACH. slowly, on stick. All through this scene he speaks rather monotonously, as if bewildered.*

Why, uncle, we had given you up for dead !

[*Leads him towards shelter.*

Now, God be praised who brought you safe.

ZACH.

I said

The same an hour ago. (*He comes towards fire.*)

Ez.

Well, what's the tale

At Bethlehem ?

ZACH. (*slowly*).

Nay, my old ears do fail ;

For, seems to me, the town was full of song

And lights and music as I came along.

BEN.

Singing and music ! Why, good uncle, sure  
They all rejoice to-night, both rich and poor,  
To see old friends again. No doubt they sing.  
We, too, have heard it. Is that anything  
So strange ?

ZACH.

Nay, nay. . . . Well, give to me to eat  
And drink a bit. (*He goes on into shelter.*)

Ez.

Here, uncle, take your seat  
Beside the fire, and tell us of the way  
You've come along. We've heard no news to-day.

[ZACH. *sits down, begins to eat. He talks slowly, with long pauses. EZRA sits by (L.) edge of shelter, cross-legged. He warms his hands at the fire. While he talks and listens BEN-EZRA keeps walking gently up and down (L.), now and then pausing to listen or speak.*

ZACH.

First, then, near Rachel's tomb, I saw three men ;  
And then two children succoured me ; and then——

D

BEN.

Succoured you, uncle ? Why, what need was there ?

ZACH.

My son, sore need there was ; for all the air  
Turned black and white about me, when those three  
Left me alone and would not succour me  
There as I swooned.

Ez.

Swooned, uncle !

ZACH.

Yes, my son,

There in the snow, ere the descent began  
To fall to Bethlehem. And there I lay,  
All frozen, till the children came my way.

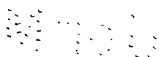
Ez.

And they did succour you ? God bless them, then.

ZACH.

God bless all children, as I say. For men

[*Music, "Nowell," soft. It continues for a  
line or two.*]



Are cruel hard. . . . I think that if came He—  
Whose coming is most sure by prophecy—  
'Tis as a child He'll come.

BEN.

Whom mean you ?

ZACH.

Why,

I mean Messias. . . . Hark, is that the sky  
That's singing ? (*Silent pause ; music ends.*)

EZ.

Nay, I hear no sound at all.  
What mean you, uncle ? . . . Sit you by the wall,  
[ZACH. *has finished eating.*  
And cover you from cold. For sure the snow  
[ZACH. *shifts position.*  
'S enough to freeze a body. . . . Well, and so  
You came all safe to Bethlehem with those  
That succoured you so kindly.

ZACH.

Aye, God knows

They succoured me !



Ez.

And, as you came below,  
Was there no more you met ?

[ZACH. *turns and looks at him fixedly.*

Why look you so,  
Uncle ? Why look so strangely ?

ZACH.

Ezra.

Ez.

Well ?

What was it that you saw ?

ZACH. (*shaking head slowly*).

No man could tell  
All that I saw.

Ez. (*eagerly*).

Nay, nay, what was it ?

ZACH.

Nay,

'Twas but a man and maid upon the way.

[*Music of "Nowell" begins; it continues down  
to end of ZACHARY's next speech.*

No more than that. But . . . Ezra, . . . such a man  
And such a maid as, since my days began,  
I never yet have seen.

BEN.

What ! fair to see

Were they ?

ZACH. (*very slowly, low voice*).

Ben-Ezra, in old prophecy  
I read of one, the Mother undefiled. . . .  
“ A Virgin shall conceive and bear a child. . . .

[*He pauses now and then, as if to remember.*

For unto us,” Isaias sang, “ a Son  
Is given.” And then I read King Solomon  
Speaks of a maiden, fairest of her race,  
Among the vineyards, young, and full of grace. . . .  
A fountain sealed and holy. . . . Well, my son,  
She whom I saw to-day was such an one. (*Music ends.*)

Ez.

Uncle ! you jest !

ZACH.

I jest not.

BEN.

And the man

That went with her ?

ZACH.

Son, when I first began  
To see the couple coming up the height,  
I had no eyes for him ; for all the night  
[*He makes slow, sweeping gesture.*  
Seemed full of glory from her face who came  
So wearily.

EZ.

Who were they ? What her name ?

ZACH. (*softly*).

Her name is Mary ; for he told me so.  
And his is Joseph.  
[*Discovers bundle by fire ; he examines it in silence.*  
What is this below

The mantle ?

BEN.

Nay, 'tis but a lamb.

ZACH.

You say

A lamb ? And born to-night ? Here far away  
Down in the snowy world ? [*He strokes its head tenderly.*

BEN.

Why, surely so,  
'Twas born but hardly half-an-hour ago !

ZACH.

And is it without blemish—fit to die

*[He speaks impressively.]*

At God's own altar ?

Ez. *(impatiently)*.

Yes, yes, yes, but why

Ask you me that ? Nay, tell us of the maid

And man you saw to-day. The lamb is laid

Content enough.

ZACH.

Content without its dam ?

BEN.

Why, surely so ! . . . Now, uncle, leave the lamb

And tell us what you saw.

ZACH.

I saw but those

I spoke of. Maid and man.

BEN.

But then, who knows

The place they come from, or the place they lie

To-night ?

ZACH. (*indignantly*).

Nay, none doth know but God and I,  
And all the hosts of heaven, and beasts, maybe,  
That give them shelter !

Ez.

Why ! what mystery  
You make of nothing, uncle !

ZACH. (*still smouldering*).

Aye. Or 'tis  
That you make nothing of great mysteries.

BEN.

Why, uncle——

ZACH. (*emphatically*).

Nay, my son, I tell you this :  
That when I saw the wondrous maiden fair,  
I knelt me down ; and lo ! she blessed me there !  
[*He spreads out his hands.*]

Ez.

You, uncle ! Blessed by her !

ZACH.

Aye, aye ; 'twas so.  
I think one day that many here below

Will envy me for that ! Her hands she laid  
Upon my head, and spoke no words, that maid.

Ez.

Why, this is folly.

ZACH. (*indignantly*).

Aye, God's foolishness,  
Wiser than all men's wisdom.

[*His tone changes to despondency.*

Yes, yes, yes !

'Tis nought but foolishness. . . . And so we came  
To Bethlehem.

BEN. (*pensively*).

And Mary was her name ?

ZACH. (*slowly*).

Aye. Joseph and Mary ; Joseph and Mary.

BEN.

Well,

Uncle, and is that all you have to tell ?

ZACH.

Aye, that is all—save that all Bethlehem  
Seemed full of glory, all to welcome them.

BEN.

Why, were the folks without to meet them ?

ZACH. (*excitedly*).

Nay ;

The folks were snug within. And yet I say  
"Twas full of glory.

Ez. (*makes soothing gesture*).

Uncle, rest awhile ;  
You're wearied. Well I see that. Mile on mile  
You've trudged to-day.

[BEN-EZRA *crosses front to (R.) by edge of shelter.*

ZACH.

Aye, lad, and more than space  
I've travelled since I looked on Mary's face.

BEN.

Nay, uncle ; rest awhile. We'll talk, maybe,  
Of lighter things. . . .

ZACH. (*ironically*).

Of wine and company,  
And wherewithal we shall be clothed—aye, speak  
Of all such matters as the Gentiles seek.

BEN.

Nay, we will talk of sheep, and lambs, and snow ;  
And such things as God sends us here below.

ZACH.

Aye, then, of Lambs. . . . Such as was born to-night.

*[He strokes bundle.]*

Ez.

Why, very well, if't please you.

ZACH.

Such a sight

Might teach the simplest ! . . . Have you heard, my son,

How that the ancient prophets speak of one

Who as a lamb is silent, as a sheep

Before his shearers all his peace doth keep ?

Ez. *(soothingly)*.

Why, uncle, you're all 'mazed to-night, it seems.

ZACH.

Aye, so they told me. Dreams, they told me, dreams !

BEN. *(cheerfully)*.

Well, as for sleep, I'm ready. What say you ?

*[He stretches and yawns.]*

*[At this point Angels begin to come in softly one by one behind ; take places. Music also—"Nowell"—begins very softly and continues when Angel speaks.]*



EZ.

Uncle, you're weary. Shall we sleep ?

ZACH.

Aye, do ;

Sleep you, and I'll keep watch. The wolf, maybe,  
Will visit us by dawn.—[*Slowly to left.*—Or if not he,  
Perchance another Lamb.

BEN. (*sitting down (R.)*).

Nay, nay, not so ;

It is for us to watch.

ZACH.

I tell you no.

Lest when He come, He find me sleeping. Sleep,  
Ben-Ezra ; 'tis for me the watch to keep.

[*The two settle themselves for sleep. ZACHARY remains bolt-upright facing audience, seated. Music continues—a little louder. He starts, then rises softly. Comes out, and sees the angels, and stands aghast. Suddenly lights turned up to the full. Angels all stretch arms up and out. ZACHARY falls on his knees. The two others awaken ; rush out. Then, to the ordinary plainsong melody of mass—*

ANGEL.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo.

CHORUS (*in simple harmony*).

Et in terra pax, hominibus bonæ voluntatis.

CURTAIN.

[*Immediately after curtain, a piece of music  
begins and continues till carol.*]





Lullay, Thou little tiny Child,—

#### SCENE IV

*Before curtain rises, invisible Chorus sings.\**



LIKE silver lamps in a distant shrine  
The stars are sparkling bright,  
The bells of the City of God ring out,  
For the Son of Mary was born to-  
night.

The gloom is past, and the morn at last  
Is coming with orient light.

\* B. & S., 1st Series, No. 2.

*Curtain rises. SCENE—Interior of stable. Back, centre (L.), a manger, with lamp burning in it above. JOSEPH and MARY kneeling before it motionless. Rest of stage dark. MARY kneels rather in foreground. The CHILD is just visible. Two angels stand throughout at the head and foot of the manger. If possible, one plays a violin, the other a zither.*

3. Now a new Power has come on the earth,

A match for the armies of hell,

A Child is born who shall conquer the foe,

And all the spirits of wickedness quell.

For Mary's Son is the Mighty One

Whom the prophets of God foretell.

4. (5.) Faith sees no longer the stable floor,

The pavement of sapphire is there ;

The clear light of Heaven streams out to the world,

• And angels of God are crowding the air.

And Heaven and Earth through the spotless Birth

Are at peace on this night so fair.

[MARY slightly changes her position. JOSEPH lays censer down. Music modulates into Coventry Carol.

Lullay, Thou little tiny Child,\*

By-by, lull-y, lull-lay,

Lullay, Thou little tiny Child,

By-by, lully, lullay.

\* B. & S., 3rd Series, No. 61

2. O sisters too, how may we do  
For to preserve this day,  
This poor youngling for whom we sing  
By-by, lully, lullay. . . .

*[Enter softly MARTHA and ABEL, hand in hand. ABEL is holding a toy-horse. They stand motionless, staring. Standing front (L.). They look the whole time at the crib.]*

3. (4.) Then woe is me, poor Child for Thee  
And ever mourn and say  
For thy parting, nor say nor sing  
By-by, lully, lullay.

MARTHA.

Tread softly— *[They advance a step or two.]*

ABEL.

Oh ! but, Martha, is that He,  
The King you told me of ?

MAR.

Hush, wait and see.  
I think so. . . . Speak to her.

ABEL.

What shall I say ?

MAR.

Why, hail her by her name. I think you may.

ABEL.

What is her name ?

MAR.

Oh, Mary is her name.

And that old man is Joseph.

ABEL.

And the same

We saw just now ?

MAR.

Hush. . . . Yes. . . . Look on her face. . . .

*[They come a step nearer crib.]*

Now speak aloud. . . .

ABEL.

Hail ! Mary, full of grace !

The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou above

All women.—Martha, Martha, may I move

A little nearer ?

E

MAR.

Yes.           *[They move a step nearer.]*

ABEL.

And blest thy Son  
Whose name is—Sister, now I have begun  
I know not how to end.

MAR.

Call Him the best  
Of all the names you know.

ABEL.

Why all the rest  
Are not so good as Jesus ; for that is  
The word for Saviour. Will that do for His ?

MAR.

Yes, call him Jesus.

ABEL.

Blest is this thy Child  
Whose name is Jesus. Hail, O Mary mild !

*[MARY turns very slowly, smiling ; makes the  
sign of the Cross, and turns again to  
adore.]*

ABEL.

Oh ! Martha, did you see the sign she made ?

*[Angels begin to come in and group themselves.  
They carry the Instruments of the Passion  
in humeral veils. They form group down  
stage (L.).*

What did that mean ?

MAR.

I know not.

ABEL.

See Him laid

So little, in the manger for His bed.

Oh ! Is He truly King of kings ? You said  
You thought he was !

MAR.

Why, yes, I think so. See  
The Angels all about His Majesty.

*[Angels remain motionless, turned towards  
manger. During the following carol the  
children go across, step by step, nearer and  
nearer : they kneel down by MARY. ABEL  
offers his horse. MARY takes it, and makes  
him put it by CHILD in Manger. MARY  
leans over manger and puts arms round  
CHILD.*



## ANGELS.

When I view the Mother holding \*  
In her arms the heavenly boy,  
Thousand blissful thoughts unfolding  
Melt my heart with sweetest joy.  
With her babe the hours beguiling,  
Mary's soul in transport lives.  
God her Son upon her smiling,  
Thousand kisses fondly gives.  
As the sun his radiance flinging  
Shines upon the bright expanse,  
So the Child to Mary clinging  
Doth her gentle heart entrance.  
See the Virgin Mother bearing

*[Enter SHEPHERDS, followed by DAV. These  
fall on their knees, ZACH. and DAV. to-  
gether; and remain till end of singing.  
ZACH. is nearest audience, then DAV.,  
then EZRA, then BEN-EZRA.]*

Jesus by her arms embraced,  
Dew on softest roses gleaming,  
Violet with lily chaste.  
Each round other fondly twining,  
Pours the shafts of mutual love,

\* B. & S., 1st Series, No. 11.

Thick as flowers in meadow shining,  
Countless as the stars above.  
Oh ! may one such arrow glowing,  
Sweetest Child which Thou dost dart  
Through Thy mother's bosom going,  
Blessed Jesus, pierce my heart. . . .

*[Music continues softly until MARY rises. If possible, the music should be played on the violin only, which the ANGEL holds. The air is that of the preceding Carol.]*

ZACH. *(stretching out his arms).*

Did I not tell you so ? Oh ! see Him lie !  
Dimittis nunc in pace, Domine  
Me servum tuum.

UZZ. *(pointing).*

See the angels great  
About the manger where He lies in state.  
Secundum verbum tuum, oculi  
Mei viderunt, quod præparasti  
Hoc tuum salutare.

BEN. *(pointing).*

See the maid  
And mother undefiled, where He is laid,

To worship Him. Ostende hunc fructum  
Ventris tui post hoc exsilium !

[JOSEPH rises. Then MARY lifts the CHILD,  
all others fall on their knees ; and all the  
ANGELS. All remain absolutely still.  
Then, if this Scene is the last, she  
brings the CHILD to the front of the  
stage. Music stops. She lifts the CHILD  
as high as she can.

MARY.

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

[With the CHILD she makes the sign of the  
Cross over the audience.

CURTAIN.





Mary~ Magnificat anima mea Dominum~





*Adeste Fideles:~*

## SCENE V

### *The Epiphany.*

*Handel's "Largo" is played before curtain rises.*

*[If this Scene is acted, in previous Scene JOSEPH does not cense the manger ; and MARY does not come to front with CHILD. She only lifts CHILD, says the words set down. After which Curtain descends.*

*Before Curtain rises the first verse of the following carol is sung.*

## I.



Three Kings of Orient are ; \*  
 Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
 Field and fountain, moor and moun-  
 tain,  
 Following yonder star.

*Chorus.* O star of wonder, star of night,  
 Star with royal beauty bright,  
 Westward leading, still proceeding,  
 Guide us to Thy perfect light.

*[Curtain rises again on same scene as before.  
 But the Manger is not there. In centre  
 back of stage stands a dais, and upon  
 it a tall chair, bare ; two unlighted candles  
 stand upon dais. Discovered, MARTHA  
 and ABEL, seated upon dais. ABEL has  
 book in his hands, reading. MARTHA is  
 sewing a child's dress. Lights are high.  
 A silence follows close of carol.]*

## II. MELCH.

Born a King, on Bethlehem's plain,  
 Gold I bring to crown Him again,

\* B. & S., 3rd Series, No. 45.

King for ever, ceasing never,  
Over us all to reign.

*Chorus.* O star of wonder, &c.

### III. GASP.

Frankincense to offer have I,  
Incense owns a Deity nigh.  
Prayer and praising, all men raising,  
Worship Him, God most High.

*Chorus.* O star of wonder, &c.

### IV. BALTH.

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
Breathes a life of gathering gloom ;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

*Chorus.* O star of wonder, &c.

### V.

Glorious now behold Him arise,  
King and God and sacrifice,  
Alleluia, Alleluia ;  
Earth to the heavens replies.

*Chorus.* O star of wonder, &c.



†MAR. (*looking up*).

Read it again. (*She listens.*)

ABEL (*reading*).

“Lo! Gentiles in Thy Light  
Shall walk ; and kings, all in the splendour bright  
Of this Thy rising. Lift Thine eyes and see !  
Lo ! they are gathered ; lo ! they come to Thee !  
Behold, Thy sons and daughters come from far ” (*pause*).  
And then again . . . “From Madian and Ephra,  
From Saba too they come . . . a company  
Of kings on camels—all shall come to Thee.  
And myrrh and gold and incense bring with them  
To show God’s glory in Jerusalem.” [*He looks up.*

MAR. (*meditatively, sewing*).

Why, ’tis most strange—this ancient prophecy !  
Surely it stands as plain as plain can be !  
And yet no kings or camels !

ABEL (*clasping his knees*).

Martha, dear,  
How I should love to see them !

MAR.

Have no fear.

'Twill come to pass, if God hath spoken so. . . .

Where is our Lady? [*She stands up and comes to front (R.).*]

ABEL (*putting book down*).

Oh! an hour ago

She went with Jesus in her arms, to see

The sheepfolds. Joseph and old Zachary

Went with her.

MAR. (*walking meditatively*).

Twelve full days have gone and past,

And yet no kings or camels.

ABEL (*clasping his knees*).

Why, how fast

'Tis gone . . . Why, heaven itself is not more sweet—

To look on Jesus!—kiss His hands and feet

And kneel before our Lady!

MAR.

Silly boy!

Why, this *is* heaven! . . . for all is peace and joy

Where Jesus is. Why now— [*Enter DAV., running (R.).*]

DAV.

They's coming in.

[*Violin begins, off, "Adeste Fideles."*

Quick, Martha, quick—the lights !      [*Signs to music.*

Now then, begin.

[*Organ takes up Adeste . . . with violin.*

ABEL springs up at DAVID's entrance ; runs to side, gets tapers and lights two candles that stand beside chair. He takes one, DAV. takes other. MAR. picks up basket of flowers. All three go to entrance (R.) and wait, facing audience, looking out. Enter (R.) two ANGELS, playing violin and zither ; then ANGELS bearing instruments of the Passion ; then ZACH. with spear ; then two SHEPHERDS with spears ; then, after slight pause, MARY, cloaked, carrying CHILD ; then JOSEPH, and two more ANGELS with swords. MAR. slips in behind two Shepherds, and walks backwards, strewing flowers, ABEL and DAV. place themselves on either side of MARY with candles and walk with her. The procession takes curve to front and comes up to chair. MARY stands at chair, slips off cloak into JOSEPH's hands, and sits.

*Candles placed by her. JOSEPH stands behind (R.), ANGELS group themselves at back. SHEPHERDS pass to (L.) front. MAR., ABEL, and DAV. seat themselves on dais ; ZACH. stands by dais (L.) ; JOSEPH behind chair (R.).*

ZACH.

Well, children, here we are—come back, you see—  
Jesus and Joseph both, and Queen Mary,  
To home in Bethlehem. . . . How have you sped  
Meantime while we were gone ?

MAR.

Why, Abel read  
A little ; and I sewed a little.

ZACH. (*lifting book*).

What is this ?

MAR.

Why, we were reading that—the prophecies  
Of kings and camels, Uncle, who, they say  
Shall come to worship Jesus. . . . Where are they ?

ZACH.

Nay, child, but ask our Lady : she knows best.

[*He signs to her.*

MAR.

Show it her, Abel.

[ABEL jumps up, opens book, steps on dais, and points out passage, first genuflecting.

ABEL.

Here ! and all the rest  
That follows . . . here . . . and here . . . here, do you  
see ? . . . [ZACH. comes and looks over book.  
Now will you tell us, please, your Majesty ?

ZACH.

Nay, let me read it. [He takes book and comes (L.) front.

“Gentiles in thy light  
Shall walk ; and kings, all in the splendour bright  
Of this thy rising. Lift Thine eyes and see  
Lo ! they are gathered . . . lo ! they come to Thee.  
Behold Thy sons and daughters come from far.”  
[Looks at MARY and back.

. . . Why, that would mean that following the star  
They come from Orient and from Araby . . .  
And yet they come not . . . will your Majesty.

[Breaks off as MARY turns and looks out (R.).  
Distant jangled murmur.

. . . Why now, what sound is that ? How loud it swells  
High on the wind !—Why, sure ! 'tis camel-bells.

[MARY remains passive, smiling. All others  
look out eagerly (R.). Sound comes nearer,  
footsteps, bells, murmur of voices. Children  
spring up. ANGELS continually look at  
CHILD.

DAV. (*excitedly, pointing*).

Oh ! look ! the camels—see how slow they wind.  
Look ! look ! Here are the kings ! and there behind  
The servants follow . . . See, they're coming . . . See ! . . .  
Now they are stopping ! ' Oh ! I'm glad that we  
Were here to see it ! . . . Now they're kneeling down—  
The camels, at the door—and all the town  
Is out to see them.

ABEL (*pointing*).

Look ! they're taking out  
The bundles and the gold ; and all about  
The people crowding. . . . Why ! how grand they are !

DAV. (*pointing*).

Oh look ! look at that sceptre ! . . . Grander far  
Than Herod's.

F

ABEL (*pointing*).

And the crowns ! Why, that's the gold  
Isaias told us of.

DAV.

Why, look how old  
That first one is.

ABEL.

(*A little frightened, taking holding of MARTHA.*)

Oh, Martha, stand by me.

(*To Mary.*) They're coming up the steps, your Majesty.

[*Mary makes gesture to ZACH. to go R.* ZACH.  
*steps R. Knocking.*

ZACH.

Yes, sir ; and who are you ?

GASPAR (*without*).

[*He speaks slowly and gravely.*

We come from far,

Led by the shining of a splendid star.

Our names are Gaspar, Melchior, Balthasar.

ZACH.

Whom do ye seek ?

GASP.

We seek a new-born King,  
To bring Him gold, and every precious thing  
That kings should have.

ZACH.

And is that all ?

GASP.

Nay, nay ;  
We bring Him myrrh ; for He shall die one day.

ZACH.

What ? He shall die ? . . .      [*He glances at Mary.*  
And is that all ?

GASP.

Why, no,  
It is not all ; for all men here below  
Shall die. But God our Lord shall rise from thence,  
And therefore do we bring Him frankincense.      [*Pause.*

ZACH. (*very slowly and impressively*).

And is that all ?



GASP.

Nay. As is meet and right,  
We bring our darkness to His Heavenly Light.  
Our ignorance to The Wise ; our sicknesses  
To Him for health ; our sins to His Righteousness.  
Aye ; all our nature, ringed about with Hell  
And Heathendom to Him, the King of Israel.

ZACH. (*making gesture of welcome*).

Come in, then, since ye know these mysteries ;  
For here He dwells, and this His Palace is.

[*He goes across again (L.) genuflecting. Children stand back, staring. Enter, slowly, GASP, MELCHIOR, and BALTHASAR, followed by two servants with bundles, &c. The three come down (R.) and stand facing towards MARY ; they bow profoundly. MARY bows back.*]

GASP. (*courteously*).

That is our Lady ?

ZACH.

Yes.

MELCH.

And that her Son,  
The King of Kings ?

ZACH.

Yes, sir.

MELCH. (*clasping his hands*).

Oh ! well begun  
Was this our journey.

BALT.

And well ended too.  
(*To MARY.*) Hail, Mary, full of grace !  
[*He bows to her again.*]

MELCH.

The Lord in truth  
Is with her ! In her arms, in very sooth !

[*MARY holds out CHILD. ZACH. makes a sign to them. They bow again profoundly as "Adeste" begins to be played, then, one by one, they go up in order. Each genuflects before dais, then, kneeling on dais, kiss the CHILD's*

## A MYSTERY PLAY

*foot and MARY's hand ; then each retires back to R. front and kneels once more. Music ends. GASPAR lifts two crowns from SERVANT's tray, and holds them out ; then sceptre.*

GASP.

Here be two crowns of gold for Him and Thee ;  
And here a sceptre all of gems.

MELCH. (*leaning forward with censer boat*).

For me

I bring sweet frankincense.

BALT. (*leaning forward with casket*).

And I but myrrh

To offer here. . . . Lord Joseph, give them her.

[JOSEPH advances, takes crowns, genuflects, places them on dais, then the casket, finally the censer, into which he puts incense ; he kneels ; all kneel. He censers throne with three double swings. He stands, genuflects, and goes back. GASPAR turns to tray, lifts a cope, still kneeling. MELCHIOR takes a little silk robe.

GASP.

Will not my Lady take a gift or two  
Of silk and satin, broidered through and through  
With jewels?

MELCH.

And a many-coloured dress  
Fit for the Little King of Righteousness.

[JOSEPH *steps forward, takes the gifts, and lays  
them at MARY's feet. Then ABEL steps  
forward with MARTHA.*

ABEL (*to GASP.*).

Will you not speak for us?

MAR.

Some word to tell  
To Jesus, for to show we love Him well?  
We—and the people here [Signs to audience.  
Who have no gold  
Nor myrrh nor frankincense; yet, young and old  
Alike, desire to show that for their parts  
They love their Infant King with all their hearts.

ZACH.

Aye, speak, King Gaspar, at this holy tide  
For us who have no gold—and all poor folks beside.

[GASPAR rises, looks at audience, then back to  
MARY. Then suddenly and fervently  
speaks. His voice rises in tone and force  
as he speaks, till he ends passionately.]

GASP.

Why, yes ; the greatest gift is yet ungiven,  
For He, who for our sake came down from Heaven,  
Has all already. For His glory fills  
The earth : the cattle on a thousand hills,  
The birds, the beasts, the fishes ; gold and gem,  
Ivory of Ophir—all are His ; for them  
He made, and they are His. [Stretches arms.]

So we entreat

To offer here before His holy feet  
That which alone He asks of us—the love  
For whose poor sake He came here from above,  
Since we, as best we can, have played our parts,  
[He kneels, stretches hands. All kneel with him.]  
Oh ! JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH, take our hearts.  
To JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH, wondrous three,

All glory, praise, and honour endless be  
From men and angels now and through eternity.

*[Music of "Adeste Fideles" instantly begins, ff.; the curtain comes down; then rises again to show MARY coped and crowned; then after one chord all begin to sing—all on their knees. At end of first verse GASPAR rises, then MELCHIOR, BALTHASAR, ZACHARY, TWO SHEPHERDS, ABEL, MARTHA, DAVID, SERVANTS, ANGELS—each one by one comes up, genuflects at daïs, and kisses the CHILD's foot and MARY's hand. Meantime JOSEPH, kneeling at side, censes them. At end of last chorus, as last line begins, MARY stands, and as she makes Sign of Cross with CHILD, all cross themselves.]*

CURTAIN.





## APPENDICES

### I. THE SCENERY



THE stage on which the play was acted was about four feet in height, twenty-four in width, and twenty-four in depth. It was furnished temporarily with footlights consisting of gas-tubing pierced by seven burners shaded with tin head-lights permanently fixed, two side-lights also permanent, and two incandescent burners behind the back-scene.

As substitutes for all these except the last, oil lamps are suggested, hung or standing and guarded with wire ; for the last, a strong acetylene light.

The scenery throughout consisted of these things only—a permanent back scene, hung from a roller, constructed of opaque, dark, grey-blue paper pierced irregularly with very small holes ; six wings, three on a side ; two dark curtains hung on a wire to slide backwards or forwards across the back scene, about a dozen dust-sheets and a quantity of brown paper and cotton-wool. (It must be remembered that the object was not to produce startling stage effects, but rather a soothing and suggestive background.)



These extremely simple accessories were employed as follows :

*First Scene.*—The curtains were drawn back out of sight altogether behind the backmost wings. The floor was entirely and irregularly covered with dust-sheets, and, to aid the appearance of irregularity, various objects, such as footstools and blocks of wood were placed beneath them. The wings were managed in this manner. Each of them was a light framework of about three feet in width and ten in height. One side of them (that presented to the audience in this scene) was covered with large sheets of brown paper of all shades, deliberately crumpled and bulging, and, here and there stained with paint. Upon the upper side of each irregularity was gummed a flat thick piece of wide wadding, following the curve of the paper, to represent fallen snow. These six wings, placed of course not parallel with the back-scene but slightly towards it, provided three exits on each side, two of which only were used.

Finally, the back-scene, painted with whitewash at its bottom to represent a distant line of snow-covered hills, hung full in view. All lights except the incandescent burners behind were turned extremely low; and the result of this elementary composition was a really astonishing effect of a snowy defile between rocks, seen at night time, with a sky blazing with stars. The light necessary for the seeing of the actors' faces was supplied by the lanterns they carried.

*Second Scene.*—The curtains were drawn forward so as nearly to meet in the centre, giving a glimpse only of the back-scene which throughout the entire play remained in

its place. The wings were reversed, showing their other sides to the audience. These reverse sides were covered with smooth yellowish paper, painted to represent large blocks of pale stone. The wings, it must be said, had no attachment at the foot, but the heads of them turned in iron forks, like the rowlocks of a boat, reversed and fixed to beams above at the proper intervals. One of the wings, that nearest the back-scene (R.), was painted to represent a tall door with iron scrollwork across it. Lights up.

*Third Scene.*—This was the same as the first, but the large properties used in this prevented a sense of monotony. Lights down.

*Fourth Scene.*—This was the same again, with other large properties. Lights half down.

*Fifth Scene.*—This was the same again with further properties. Lights up.

Finally, overhead throughout were hung ordinary "flies," or long strips of cotton, as broad as the stage and about two feet deep.

## II. THE PROPERTIES

Under this head it is proposed to describe chiefly those properties that needed actual construction. For all the articles used throughout, such as the table and stools in the kitchen-scene, it is enough to say that they should be as simple and rough as possible. They should be even rather dirty.

In the *first scene* there is no property used beyond those connected with costumes (to be described later) except the

tree-stump on which the shepherd sits. This is simply a three-legged stool with a dust-sheet draped over it.

In the *second scene*, there is the fire over which the inn-keeper is cooking. A strong black bandbox was taken, and from it were cut out sections, supported by uprights, making it to resemble a road-mender's brazier. On the floor of this stood a cylindrical candle-lantern with a burning candle within; and round this lantern was wrapped red flannel. Between the flannel and the bars of the "brazier" were inserted sticks at irregular intervals. The whole thing was placed on a three-legged stool, and a brown cooking-dish rested on the top.

In the *third scene* this fire figured again, standing on the ground. Most of the stage R. was occupied by the shepherds' shelter, with room, however, left to pass both behind and before it. The shelter was constructed of a three-sided clothes-horse, about six feet high; and this was hung all over and roofed by pieces of old sacking and deerskins. The opening was towards the audience. A hurdle, standing on end, projected above the roof.

The "lamb" was life-size, ingeniously made out of cotton-wool, with a cotton skin on which were painted eyes and mouth. It is wrapped throughout in a piece of sacking, so that no more of it need be finished than the head and front legs.

In the *fourth scene* the chief property is the crib. A box was taken about four feet long, by three by two, and set on one of its long sides upon a table. The whole of the box and table was then covered with crumpled and painted brown paper, resembling that fastened to the wings; straw

was laid inside, and a silver lamp hung from the edge to the upper side. The starry sky at the back was variegated by a large hurdle projecting from behind the crib. The bambino was supplied by a well-known firm in London.<sup>1</sup>

In the *fifth scene*, from which the crib is absent, the principal property is the throne and dais. This needs little comment. The dais came from a schoolroom; and the chair was a very tall armless one of yellowish wood. Two tall mahogany candlesticks stood on either side upon the dais. The book used by the boy was a large leather volume bound by strings.

### III. THE COSTUMES

Before treating these in detail, it is necessary to treat first the general principles that were followed.

These were :

1. That the drapery should be voluminous.
2. That the colours should be dark and soft.
3. That the dresses should be shaped after Eastern models.
4. That all such things as tinsel and spangles should be utterly eschewed.

Now the foundations of Eastern dress are the following :

1. The *Tunic*.—This is a long-sleeved garment resem-

<sup>1</sup> The "Instruments of the Passion" are as follows: A spear, a sponge on a reed, a crown of thorns, three nails, a board painted with INRI. These can easily be bought or made, and are carried visibly in white humeral veils.

bling an alb. It may be of any colour, or white. In the case of young men and boys it is drawn through the girdle up to the knees.

2. The *Burnous* or Mantle.—This is more difficult to describe; but it may be constructed by taking a large rectangular piece of stuff, about four feet deep by six feet wide. Imagine this spread out on the ground. Then take the top corners and fold them in about eighteen inches along the top edge, folding in at the same time the whole length of the stuff below. Sew along the top edge only to right and left, thus making supports for the shoulders. Then cut at either side, near the top, in the crease of the stuff, two wide arm-holes. Finally, fix about eighteen inches down the front, on the folded stuff, a strong hook and eye on either side.

The *Burnous*, then, is generally worn simply as a wide and voluminous cloak, fastened by the hook and eye; but in the case of one or two the arms may be put through the holes. It should be made of heavy stuff, and should hang loosely and even clumsily. It may be variegated with effect by long strips of stuff or some other colour attached down the front of the folded wings and straight over the shoulders down the back.

3. The *Girdle*.—This may be of rope in the case of the poor, and of rich stuffs in the case of the rich. When the girdle is wide weapons may be thrust into it.

4. The *Head-dress*.—This is of two kinds:

- (1) The turban proper, made of voluminous thin material wound round the head and tucked into the top.

- (2) A large thin piece of stuff, made to fit the head by a ring of elastic on the inner side and flowing down behind over the shoulders and back.

5. The *Foot-gear*.—This must consist of sandals, with the addition, in the case of those whose skirts are worn to the knee, of voluminous stuff wrapped round the leg and tied there by criss-cross bindings of string or leather, or the material used by gardeners for tying up plants.

Now, if these principles are followed, the rest is easy. (The “Kings” and the “Angels” need separate treatment.)

1. *Mary*.—She wears a night-dress to her feet. Over this she wears a tunic of dark-blue muslin, also coming to her feet; a white burnous; a long white veil; and sandals. In the fifth scene she is, after the first fall of the curtain, robed in a white cope, and crowned. A sceptre is also put into her hands.

The *crown* was an imperial one, constructed of cardboard covered with crumpled gold paper, with strings of jewels and brooches, over a crumpled cap of dark-blue velvet. The sceptre can be made in the same kind of way.

2. *Joseph*.—He wears a white tunic to his feet, with heavy white or yellowish girdle; a dark-red burnous striped with white; and a white handkerchief over his head and shoulders. He is bearded and browed with grey over a stained face. [See below.]

3. *Tobias*.—He wears a dark-blue tunic with broad brown girdle, brown burnous and turban of “Rhodian” silk. He is girt to just below the knee, and wears hose and sandals. His face is stained and eyebrows darkened.

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4. *David*.—He wears simply a short-sleeved dark-green tunic and cord girdle ; hose and sandals.

5. *Zachary*.—He wears a long yellowish tunic to his feet, a brown burnous striped with white, a brown handkerchief on his head ; and sandals. He is bearded and browed with grey over a stained face. [See below.]

6. *Ezra and Ben-Ezra*.—These are in short dark-brown tunics and are wrapped in deer-skins. If skins are not available, burnouses must be substituted. *Ezra* wears a red handkerchief on his head, and *Ben-Ezra* a white turban. They carry spears.

7. *The Three Merchants*.—These are all in long tunic and burnous of various darkish colours. All wear turbans and sandals, and Eliphaz a fur wrap. The stuffs used should be of better quality than the others, each of them wearing at least one piece of silk. Each has a broad girdle, in which is a knife or two. They may carry or wear beads.

*Martha*.—She wears a white tunic, falling half-way between knee and foot, and dark-blue burnous ; hose and sandals.

*Abel*.—He wears a white tunic and deer-skin, with hose and sandals.

*Herald*.—He is dressed simply in a long girded white tunic and sandals.

*The Angels*.—These, as a foundation, wear night-dresses, girded. Over this each wears the dress of one of the three Greater Orders. The “priest-angels” wear crossed stoles ; the “deacon-angels” dalmatics, and the “sub-deacon angels” tunics. These garments are all made of

voluminous white butter-muslin. They should wear no wings or spangles or colours of any kind whatsoever. Their hair is combed out at length over their shoulders. Two "priest-angels" carry drawn swords upright.

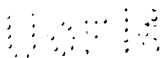
*The Three Kings.*—These must be dressed as gorgeously as possible, with any materials available; but the following points may be remembered with advantage. The colours used should be splendid, but not light or gaudy. (If, for example, light-blue is used, it is seen at once to be entirely out of scale with the other figures—heliotrope and purple and dark-red or green are far more effective.) Each should present one predominant colour. Each should wear, in addition to tunic and mantle, a long train pinned to the shoulders, edged with ermine. (Ermine is produced effectively by long strips of cotton wadding dotted with black stuff "tails.") The crowns should be set inside or outside of voluminous turbans of silk. The jewellery worn by them should be heavy and effective and barbaric; for example, a twisted serpent of gold paper turned up the arm, or a heavy collar across the shoulders.

The *Servant* of the Kings should be dressed on the same lines, but without mantle or train.

*Gaspar* should be bearded and browed with grey; all four persons should be heavily stained on face and hands.

A suitable stain may be obtained from Mr. Peck, chemist, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, such as is used in the "Greek Play" at the University.

The beards used should not be the ordinary beards made in a piece. Hair should be obtained from a theatrical property shop, and affixed piece by piece with strong spirit-





gum. For those who wear beards a few lines upon the face are generally necessary to blend the complexion with the hair.

#### IV. THE METHOD OF ACTING

It must be remembered that the play does not attempt realism. It is full of deliberate anachronisms. To act, then, in a realistic manner would be to appeal to the eye in one key and to the dramatic perception in another. It was found therefore necessary during the rehearsals to insist again and again upon a certain conventionality in gestures and tones of voices. The actors were encouraged to be slow, to speak extremely clearly, and to make large deliberate gestures rather than spontaneous movements—to beckon, for instance, with the arm rather than the hand. (This method was, of course, that followed in the recent performances of "Everyman.") On these lines it was found that the play occupied slightly over two hours.

Especially necessary was this system in the case of such characters as those of the "Herald," "Mary," "Joseph," and the "Three Kings." The "Herald," standing outside the curtains, holds himself perfectly upright for the most part. When he bows, he bows low with both hands across the breast; when he signs himself with the cross, he slowly "envelops" himself [as M. Huysmans says] in his movement. The appeal of "Mary" also depends entirely (since she does not speak) upon extremely slow, dignified movements. When she swoons she remains motionless, sunk upon herself; when she moves, she does so with extreme deliberation; she looks for a long time at the

1100

character to whom she directs herself, before moving in his regard.

In the same manner, "Joseph" is lost always in a contemplation of "Mary"; his eyes are fixed on her; he keeps the same attitude for long together.

So, too, with the "Three Kings." They carry themselves extremely upright, they make sweeping gestures, they chant rather than speak, they bow and genuflect slowly and profoundly. The "Children" only are allowed to be spontaneous, without being abrupt.

The character of "Zachary" is the most difficult of performance. He has to avoid prosiness on one side and passion on the other; "deliberateness" must be his watchword. I am afraid he is rather a tiresome person; but he is as necessary as the Greek chorus, to whom he corresponds. He appears less tiresome if he is represented by a very tall actor who carries himself bent.

Those responsible, then, for rehearsals, must not be afraid of long silences in which little happens. The play is intended as a series of meditations rather than of dramatic situations and developments. Again and again, if the grouping is arranged upon a wide and semi-heroic scale, the actors will be found to fall into tableaux, which may well be looked at in silence. During the longer of these involuntary tableaux, however, music is sung or played.





